

Cover Sheet – Social Service Activity

AGENCY NAME: Family Outreach Of Amherst
AGENCY ADDRESS: 401 Main Street Suite 12 Amherst, MA 01002
AGENCY PHONE NO: CONTACT PERSON: Laura Reichsman
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2015 CDBG FUNDING REQUEST: \$36,400

1. Project Name: Strive to Thrive

2. Project Description: The Strive to Thrive Project will work with parents of families who chronically cycle through crisis, help them develop an individualized plan to create a better life for their families, and support them as they accomplish their goals

3. Project Location (Street address): 401 Main Street Amherst, MA

4. Budget Request: \$36,400

5. Type of Activity (check one):

- Family stabilization
- Youth development
- Economic self-sufficiency (adult education)
- Food and nutrition
- Emergency & preventive services: rental assistance, fuel assistance, and shelter services.
- Other – please explain

6. National Objective:

Total number of beneficiaries (individuals served): 45- 60

Total Low/Mod beneficiaries (individuals served): 45-60

A. National Objective Description

Family Outreach of Amherst's Strive to Thrive project meets national objective #1, benefiting low and moderate-income households. Low and moderate households will benefit from the project by stabilizing their lives, breaking the cycle of crisis, and learning the life skills necessary to create a better life for themselves and their children, FOA will document participant eligibility by completing and signing a self declaration form declaring household size and income.

B. Demonstrate Consistency with Community Development Strategy

The proposed project is consistent with the Community Development Strategy priorities of family stabilization, economic self-sufficiency and preventative services. The project will help participants identify the challenges in their lives that cause them to experience regular crisis and prevents them from stabilizing their lives. We will work with participants to overcome those barriers, develop a plan to gain the skills necessary to stabilize their lives, and support participants as they put their plan into action.

C. Agency Information

Family Outreach of Amherst (FOA) program has been providing intensive outreach and support services for twenty-five years to the most vulnerable families in Amherst. Interrupting the cycle of child abuse, homelessness, and domestic violence is the primary focus of our community-based, intensive case management for families in need of substantial supports and services. FOA also offers Information and Referral and Advocacy services related to many important issues, such as housing, childcare, counseling, health care and education. In the past year over 450 Amherst families were supported as they struggled with:

Homelessness

Intervention by the Department of Children and families because of poor parenting choices

A mental health episode that required hospitalization

A diagnosis of a serious medical condition

Loss of benefits because of uncompleted paperwork

A domestic violence episode

A relapse of substance abuse

The goal of Family Outreach of Amherst is to support and assist the most vulnerable members of our community. Our clients are families who struggle with mental health, trauma, medical, substance abuse, and life skills issues. When working with a family we have no identified "consumer." Each individual member of the family is a client and is offered services depending on their specific needs. This means that in a given week we may take a mother and infant to a WIC appointment, attend a special education meeting for an older sibling, take the teenager of the family to buy a swimsuit so they can participate in gym class at the middle school, and take the father of the family to a job interview. In one week, with one family, we have helped with nutrition, education, basic needs, and job skills.

D. Project Budget Information

The budget as prepared by the FOA program director and a budget analyst from the Center for Human Development. Analysis of personnel costs included examining comparable salaries of current staff members as well as an assessment of current payroll tax and fringe rates. Non-personnel costs reflect typical costs needed to support field caseworkers - staff training & development, office costs (ie. postage, copier, telephone), staff mileage expenses, etc.

Assessment of existence of matching funds to support this initiative was confirmed.

The budget was developed by a MBA senior budget analyst at the Center for Human Development with over 20 years of experience in business, grant accounting and administration.

Project Description

Family Outreach of Amherst (FOA) provides case management, advocacy and information and referral services to low-income families in Amherst and the surrounding towns. Most of the time when a parent begins to meet with a FOA caseworker, there is an identified “next step” the parent would like to take, such as furthering their education, seeking employment, or simply becoming more engaged in the community.

Our Strive to Thrive (STT) program is the next step. When a parent enrolls in the STT program a FOA caseworker meets with the participant and helps them identify specific goals the participant has to gain greater self-sufficiency and creates an action plan that will identify specific milestones to achieve the final goal. Participants meet regularly with a caseworker to ensure that issues that arise as they work toward their goal are addressed quickly so a participant can continue to move forward toward their goal without interruption.

Each milestone the participant achieves while in the STT project is treated as a success with recognition from the program. The FOA caseworker focuses on one milestone at a time and offers the support and resources necessary to ensure that participant is successful. In addition, since each milestone is treated as a success, if a participant accomplishes two of their designated goals such as obtaining a GED and securing a volunteer position, this is celebrated as an enormous accomplishment, building confidence and modeling consistency and the value of education and community engagement to the participant’s children.

Demonstrate that the community at the local level has prioritized the activity.

When the STT program began we initially received more than twenty-five referrals from other human services agencies. As participants have been enrolled, they have become our best referral source, encouraging their friends and neighbors to participate. While we continue to receive referrals from other agencies, we believe the best gauge of community priority for the STT program is the enthusiasm in the low-income community for the assistance the program offers.

We anticipate working with 45 participants a year.

Project Need

The most effective way to break the cycle of poverty is to ensure that parents are raising healthy, stable children and the best way to do this is to give parents the opportunity to access resources, services and programs that will help them be the healthiest parents they can be. The STT project accomplishes this by not only assisting parents to enroll in programs and services that help them create a more stable life, but supports them each step of the way to ensure that they are successful in their efforts. The Project’s caseworker problem-solves with and supports participants as issues arise so that a setback is not a failure.

FOA works with approximately forty-five families in Amherst at any given time. While families often come to us when they are experiencing a crisis, most families continue to work with us beyond the crisis to help stabilize their families further. Of the forty-five families on our caseload the majority have expressed a desire to obtain the resources and skills to create a better life for themselves and their children.

Community Involvement and Support

FOA implemented a client needs survey in the spring of 2015. Clients were asked to identify specific resources and activities that they would find most beneficial to ensure the success of the

STT program. Assistance accessing child care and transportation were the most prevalent needs of the thirty-seven mothers who responded to the survey. In addition, since the inception of the program the need for financial literacy classes and debt reduction support has become very apparent. To address this, the STT program will be creating a support group made up of participants who are struggling with debt as well as participants who have learned skills to stay out of debt. Volunteers with experience in financial planning and budgeting will also attend the groups to offer concrete advice and guidance.

The STT project is supported not only by paid staff but by a team of volunteers from the community with specific expertise such as financial planners, employment and child development specialists, and nutritionists.

Project Feasibility

The FOA staff is well known and respected in the low-income community of Amherst. The program manager and her staff have forty years of collective experience and all are specialists in resource referral, housing issues, and parenting. Eighty percent of the FOA staff are bi-lingual. FOA has been providing intensive outreach and support services for twenty-five years. At its core is community-based, intensive case management for families in need of substantial supports and services. FOA has earned a reputation throughout the community as a program that can be relied on to serve effectively those families facing the greatest challenges with the fewest resources.

FOA is a program of the Center for Human Development, which has 60 programs spanning the Pioneer Valley and Connecticut. As a program of CHD we can operate as a small grass-roots community based organization but we are supported by an exceptional team of bookkeepers, budget managers, payroll and human resource experts and a management team that is talented and supportive. This ensures that contracts and budgets are managed effectively and that there is expert oversight.

Project timeline

Participants will be enrolled, individualized plans will be developed and participants will start trainings, employment searches, and volunteer positions throughout the year as well as attend a peer support group and topic-specific workshops. Milestones will be celebrated at a monthly community lunch with a final community event honoring all participants and volunteers.

Project Impact

The anticipated impact of the project will be:

- Participants will gain the skills they need to stabilize their lives
- Participants will be able to effectively communicate and model the skills learned to their children.
- Participants will become more active participants in the workforce and community, giving them more resources to better their lives.
- Participants will be able to address issues that arise more quickly. An example might be that if they have a financial setback and fall behind on their rent they will have the communication skills and confidence to approach their landlord to negotiate a payment plan
- Participants will become more self sufficient

The effectiveness of the project will be measured by a pre and post questionnaire given to the participants, an analysis of the milestones reached, and feedback from staff and volunteers.

How will the impact of this service on individual clients be tracked over time?

The participants who enroll in the program will be asked to agree to be interviewed at the end of the project and to be contacted once for the next two years so that we can document the effectiveness of the program over time. In addition, we anticipate that the majority of participants will stay involved in FOA activities for longer than the twelve month period of the initial project, thus allowing us to continue to monitor their success and support them if they have a setback.

Define the direct and indirect outcomes that will result from the project.

Direct outcomes-

- Chronically struggling families will become more competent.
- Children of chronically struggling families will be exposed to higher functioning parents and will learn the life skills needed to live successful lives
- The community will gain stronger, more competent parents, employees and volunteers.

Indirect Outcomes-

- Because chronically struggling families will gain the skills needed to become more self-sufficient and will become higher functioning, town services will be less utilized and ultimately, less overwhelmed.
- Because participants will become more actively involved in their children's lives, better relationships will form at the child's school lessening the strain on school personnel.

Identify quantitative and qualitative measures to determine that the outcomes are achieved.

We will track quantitative measures by documenting the following:

- Number of participants enrolled in program
- Number of milestone accomplished by each participant
- Number and type of each goal reached by each participant

We will track qualitative measures by administering a survey to each participant to evaluate life skills competency at quality of life perception at the time of enrollment and again at the time of completion of the program.

Will this service enable clients to become self-sufficient?

The definition of self-sufficiently will vary by participant. In some cases there will be a clear trajectory from a STT participant relying on public benefits to the participant obtaining employment. In other cases, self-sufficiency will mean that the participant no longer experiences crisis on a regular basis, can resolve issues that come up in a timely way, are fully involved in the community through good relationships with their child's school and volunteer opportunities, and can model these skills to their children.

How is this service linked to other human/social service programs in the community?

The STT project will collaborate closely with many social service programs in the area such as literacy, ESL, and job training services, as well as Big Brothers Big Sisters, The Survival Center, after-school programs and mental health providers.

CHD/Family Outreach of Amherst Strive to Thrive		
July 1, 2016 thru June 30, 2017		
PERSONNEL		
FAMILY CASEWORKER		35,141
SUB-TOTAL SALARIES		35,141
F.I.C.A.		2,646
UNIVERSAL HEALTH INSURANCE TAX		67
UNEMPLOYMENT TAX		0
WORKMAN'S COMPENSATION		499
Total Payroll Taxes		3,212
LIFE INSURANCE & DISABILITY		412
HEALTH INSURANCE		5,531
DENTAL INSURANCE		247
PENSION		1,054
Total Fringe Benefits		7,244
Total Personnel Costs		45,597
DIRECT PROGRAM COST		
SUB-TOTAL PROVIDER REIMBURSEMENT		0
STAFF TRAINING/204		
TRAINING/STAFF		250
STAFF MILEAGE/TRAVEL/205		
STAFF MILEAGE		240
PROG. SUPPLIES, MAT. & EXP. ITEMS OF EQUIP.215		
SUPPLIES/PROGRAM		400
DEPRECIATION - COMPUTERS		
SUB-TOTAL PROGRAM SUPPLIES		400
PROGRAM SUPPORT/216		
EQUIPMENT RENTAL		0
INSURANCE PROFESSIONAL		281
POSTAGE		100
PRINTING/REPRODUCTION		200
STAFF INCENTIVES		
SUPPLIES/OFFICE		100
TELEPHONE MOBILE		480
SUB-TOTAL PROGRAM SUPPORT		1,161
PROGRAM FACILITIES		
RENT OFFICE		615
SUB-TOTAL PROGRAM FACILITIES		615
Other Direct Costs		2,666
Total Direct Costs		48,264
INDIRECT COST		5,695
GRAND TOTAL		53,960
REVENUE SOURCES		
INCOME - FUND RAISING		2,560
INCOME-AEC Foundation		15,000
INCOME - GRANT Town of Amherst CDBG		36,400
Total Revenue		53,960
SURPLUS/DEFICIT		0